



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
www.ridoe.net

Washington Oak Elementary School

COVENTRY

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

October 8, 2004



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

**RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

James A. DiPrete, Chairman

Jo Eva Gaines, Vice Chair

Colleen Callahan, Secretary

Frank Caprio

Representative Paul W. Crowley

Sue P. Duff

Senator Hanna M. Gallo

Gary E. Grove

Patrick A. Guida

Mario A. Mancieri

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION**

Peter McWalters, Commissioner

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

For information about SALT, please contact:

Rick Richards

401-222-4600, x 2194

or

salt@ridoe.net.

1. INTRODUCTION	1
<i>THE PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THIS REPORT</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>USING THE REPORT</i>	<i>2</i>
2. PROFILE OF WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	4
3. PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT.....	5
4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING	6
<i>CONCLUSIONS</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>IMPORTANT THEMATIC FINDINGS IN STUDENT LEARNING</i>	<i>7</i>
5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING	8
<i>CONCLUSIONS</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COVENTRY SCHOOL DISTRICT</i>	<i>10</i>
6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING .	11
<i>CONCLUSIONS</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>COMMENDATIONS FOR WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COVENTRY SCHOOL DISTRICT</i>	<i>13</i>
7. FINAL ADVICE TO WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....	14
8. ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT	15
REPORT APPENDIX	17
<i>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THIS REPORT.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</i>	<i>18</i>
THE WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM	22
MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM	23
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VISIT TEAM	24

1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Washington Oak Elementary School from October 4-8, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Washington Oak Elementary School?

How well does the teaching at Washington Oak Elementary School affect learning?

How well does Washington Oak Elementary School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Washington Oak Elementary School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 178 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Team members had conversations with various faculty and staff members for a total of 63 hours.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 34.5 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- Important enough to include in the report
- Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit
- Set in the present, and
- Contains the judgment of the team

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Washington Oak Elementary School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Coventry School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Coventry School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Washington Oak Elementary School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Built in 2002, Washington Oak Elementary is a suburban elementary school located in central Coventry, Rhode Island. Formerly housed in the Flat River Middle School, this new facility serves students from kindergarten through grade five. There are four half-day kindergarten classes, five classes at each grade level and five self-contained special education classes. School-wide themes include tolerance, celebrating diversity, student safety and intellectual growth.

Of the 578 students enrolled at Washington Oak, 94% are white, 3% are African-American, 1% is Asian and 2% are Hispanic. Sixteen percent of the students receive free or reduced price lunch; 15% receive special education services; and two students receive English as a Second Language service.

The Washington Oak faculty and staff consists of one principal, 27 classroom teachers, seven special education teachers and five full- and part-time special subjects teachers in music, art, physical education, library and band. In addition, one part-time and two full-time reading specialists, a part-time literacy coach, one behavior specialist and one nurse service the school. Several additional specialists, who provide services to students, are shared with other schools. These include three speech teachers, two occupational therapists and one physical therapist, as well as a school psychologist, two social workers and an ESL teacher.

Washington Oak is an inclusion model school. All self-contained special needs students spend part of their day as mainstreamed, grade level students. Resource teachers service students in the grade level classrooms whenever possible. An extended-day kindergarten program is available for students who have been identified as needing additional instruction.

Several school-wide initiatives to support student learning are in place at Washington Oak. Faculty, support staff and parents have attended training in the *Empowering Writers Program*[™] to establish common language, goals and expectations in narrative and expository writing. The school schedule provides grade-level common planning time. Teachers also participate in mentoring, looking at student work and before-school academies.

Students at Washington Oak participate in a variety of school programs, activities and community service projects. Primary and intermediate grades are paired with a 'buddy class,' and students with social needs meet weekly with community mentors.

Student performance on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examinations improved dramatically from 2003, especially in math. Student performance jumped from 31% to 79% in meeting or exceeding the standard in math concepts and from 20% to 77% in problem solving.

3. PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Washington Oak is the largest elementary school in the Coventry School District. Tolerance is the focus of the school. A “Tolerance Tree” dominates the central courtyard, where words describing good character and acceptance hang from its branches. These messages, however, extend far beyond the tree and live with every student and teacher at Washington Oak. The entire school community is committed to the belief that all children, despite their differences, are valued.

Teachers at Washington Oak are reflective professionals, who strive for excellence. Their dynamic principal empowers them to participate in the decision-making process. All stakeholders share leadership responsibilities. Grade level teams, grouped into pods, facilitate small learning communities. These learning communities include students from all levels of physical and intellectual abilities. With support and encouragement from the principal, the teachers and the staff work collaboratively to best serve the needs of all learners. They continually share their ideas, develop common instructional strategies and monitor student progress. They respond to the demands of the district, state and federal mandates while maintaining a “kids first” agenda.

Due to a recent turnover of personnel, a powerful feeling of change and rebirth exists at Washington Oak. Fifty percent of the staff was new to the school last year. Rich conversations among teachers and staff generate ideas to improve instruction. Intellectual curiosity, coupled with reflective teaching practices, pushes the school forward. Parents, staff and students describe this school as a safe and caring place, where learning is important to everyone.

The mission of the school is clear, but the implementation is incomplete. While teachers have had some training and support to develop their expertise, inconsistencies exist in both teaching practices and the schools’ expectations for student success. Technology for student learning and school use is minimal. Washington Oak teachers work hard to implement fully an inclusion model within the school, but this model is not evident in every classroom.

Despite Washington Oak’s high test scores, continued improvement in student learning requires further differentiation of instruction, a more focused, unified approach to the teaching of math and a greater emphasis on literacy skills.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Student performance in solving math problems and understanding math concepts significantly improved on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination. Although students use problem solving strategies across the curricula areas, their levels of proficiency vary greatly. Many students know how to apply the skills and concepts they learned in previous lessons and grade levels to solve new problems. Students say that math “makes their brains work.” Some clearly connect math to their daily lives when they report that they can now determine the amount of change they should receive at the school store. However, other students struggle to choose appropriate strategies to solve problems. Additionally, they have difficulty solving problems in an organized manner, despite the availability of many resources including wall charts, checklists, rubrics and the “go-to students.” Students are confident problem solvers in classes where they can challenge, justify and share their solutions. However, students in other classes often are frustrated or bored. Some lack the readiness required for the task, and others are ready for greater challenges. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing school improvement plan, classroom textbooks, records of professional development activities, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents and district administrators)*

Most students are confident writers. Their writing hooks the reader with descriptive details, effective organization and strong voice. Students know how to use rubrics as a resource to guide their writing and are beginning to use rubrics to evaluate and improve their work. Students clearly know that writing has a purpose and is an important communication tool in all curricula areas. They say they like writing down whatever is on their minds and sharing their thoughts with their teachers and their friends. However, in classes where students are not held accountable for their work, students are satisfied with writing the bare minimum. Many do not consistently apply editing and revising strategies to improve their work. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

It is not surprising that students performed well on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination reading subtests. Students say reading is like having a TV in school because it gives them a good “mind movie.” Excitement about reading is evident, as they discuss and compare the books they are reading to ones they previously have read and as they make new connections and deepen their understanding. They know how to predict, question what they read while they are reading it, find evidence in the text to support their conclusions and reread to clarify the meaning. Beginning readers, as well as struggling readers, use a variety of decoding strategies. While many students successfully use the “five finger rule” to choose an appropriate book to read, a few choose books at random in an attempt to meet their teacher’s expectations. These students are often off task when reading independently and put little effort into understanding the text. Some are frustrated because the book is too difficult, and others are not challenged because the book is too easy. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Students at Washington Oak School clearly understand that they are here to learn. They are also tolerant and kind when they listen and interact with their friends and adults. They respect and support those with differences and enjoy working and learning together. They participate in community service projects, learning the responsibilities of good citizens. Students say they feel safe “because they have a good principal and lots of people helping them.” They know the school routines, what is expected of them and how to use school-wide resources to support their learning. While all students say they like school, some say they are bored as they sit and listen for long periods of class time. Often their boredom is increased because the work is too easy or they don’t know the purpose for an activity. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers and school administrator, observing the school outside of the classroom, 2003 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan)*

IMPORTANT THEMATIC FINDINGS IN STUDENT LEARNING

- ◆ *Students know routines and expectations and use them to guide their learning.*
- ◆ *Students work cooperatively and are accepting of one another. They use a variety of resources and strategies to help them learn.*
- ◆ *Students understand the importance of learning and connect their learning to their own lives.*
- ◆ *Not all students are challenged or actively participate in their learning.*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Teachers report that, after examining test data on the 2002 and 2003 New Standards Reference Examinations, they decided to target problem solving. Consequently, math instruction is a priority. Working together, teachers set goals and action steps, as shown in the school improvement plan, to address student needs. They apply concepts and problem solving strategies in their daily classroom routines. Teachers deliberately use math language and model the use of math tools to connect math to their daily classroom activities. In addition, they teach students how to use strategies that are consistent across grade levels. However, teachers struggle to use three different math programs in an attempt to provide balanced mathematics instruction. While they provide ample opportunities for students to practice their previously learned skills and concepts, they allow a limited amount of time for students to explore, connect and extend their knowledge. Few teachers use informal assessments to guide and plan for individualized instruction. As a result, struggling learners are frustrated, and more competent learners are not challenged. While all teachers collaborate and share their expertise, some report a need for more professional development in the effective implementation of the three math programs. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, self-study, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, classroom textbooks, records of professional development activities, school improvement plan)*

Teachers' excitement about writing extends to their students. Using the *Empowering Writers™* and *Kid writing™* programs, they explicitly and systematically teach elements of quality writing. Focused instruction builds and connects across the grade levels, allowing students time to practice and extend their writing skills. Teachers teach students to use rubrics, analyze their writing, follow frameworks, understand different genres and write in different curricula areas. In classrooms where teachers celebrate writing and encourage students to share their work, students put more effort into their writing and develop their expertise. Teachers acknowledge the need to improve writing conventions and target these skills daily during Daily Language Practice. While school-wide editing charts and word walls increase the consistency of expectations across the grades, spelling instruction differs greatly and is rarely individualized to meet the needs of students. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, parents and school and district administrator, talking with teachers, reviewing self-study, completed and ongoing student work, school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Teachers use guided reading, Literature Circles, whole class instruction and independent reading activities to encourage students to read throughout the day. While many teachers are beginning to implement new, innovative instructional reading practices, some teachers wisely acknowledge that they require more time to become proficient. Reading and literacy teachers play an important role as they model, coach and share effective reading strategies with their colleagues. However, not all teachers spend sufficient time teaching reading on a daily basis. Some do not challenge the more talented learners in their classes. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with teachers, school administrator, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan)*

Teachers at Washington Oak work hard. Student learning is their central focus. They collaborate, effectively work together and form professional and personal bonds. They are a community of learners and risk-takers. Teachers seek out their colleagues for professional advice, guidance and feedback on the effectiveness of their lessons, verifying their willingness to reflect upon their practices and confirming their desire to grow as professionals. They support and encourage one another to try new practices by sharing ideas during common planning time. They model and co-teach lessons to create consistency and coherence in the school. Parents report that teachers are accessible, communicate frequently and strive to meet the individual needs of their students. Most teachers eagerly welcome and readily include students who have multiple and diverse needs in learning and socialization. However, not all teachers challenge students or hold them accountable for their achievement and behavior. While teachers participate in numerous professional development activities, they wisely recognize the need to continue to develop their expertise. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, parents, school administrator, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities, 2004 SALT Survey report, school improvement plan, observing grade level meetings)*

Commendations for Washington Oak Elementary School

Hard working, reflective, supportive faculty and staff who continually seek ways to perfect their instruction

Risk-takers, focused on improving student learning

Inclusive, collaborative staff who celebrate the differences among students

Recommendations for Washington Oak Elementary School

Develop consistent, high expectations for students, and increase academic rigor. Hold all students accountable for their learning and behavior.

Increase the use of frequent and informal assessments to monitor student progress and differentiate instruction. Continue to review student work with your colleagues to monitor the effectiveness of teaching practices.

Continue to seek professional development, and work with colleagues to increase competence in all areas of instruction.

Devote more time daily to reading instruction across all grade levels.

Balance teacher-directed lessons with student exploration, practice, extension and reflection.

Continue school-wide efforts to improve writing conventions.

Recommendations for Coventry School District

Continue to support teachers in their desire for professional development, especially in the areas of differentiated instruction and inclusion.

Support teaching and learning by providing updated curricula.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

A strong principal leads the school. His vision of caring for all students permeates the school. Parents say the principal knows all 578 students by name. He sets high standards for himself, the students and his staff, proudly stating he “expects Washington Oak to become a Blue Ribbon School.” With a “What do you need, I’ll get it for you” attitude, he creatively finds resources to help teachers do their jobs. While the principal sets the tone, leadership is evident throughout the school. Teachers take risks, become leaders and make decisions. Despite the large and diverse student population, Washington Oak runs efficiently and smoothly as a result of the combined efforts of the school administrator, school improvement team, teacher leaders, PTA and students. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing records of professional development activities, minutes of team meetings and the school improvement team, self-study)*

Special education students are a high priority. Teachers say that they are “part of the fabric” of the school. Students work and play together, regardless of their differences. Washington Oak adapts programs to integrate students into general education and collaborative classrooms. General and special educators take common professional development courses and use student needs to determine placement and appropriate instruction. District and school administrators report that Washington Oak teachers are “working to blur the lines” between general and special education students. The effective use of staff and the strong involvement of families make this inclusion model successful, but this model does not exist in every classroom. *(following students, observing the school outside of the classroom, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, district and school policies and practices, 2004 Rhode Island Alternate Assessment, records of professional development activities, observing grade level meetings)*

The positive school climate at Washington Oak School is its greatest asset. It is a collegial, friendly, child-centered environment. Washington Oak promotes tolerance and inclusion. Parents play a critical role. They volunteer in the classrooms, participate in school-wide professional development and sponsor programs that support family involvement. Using positive preventative measures, the principal, behavior specialist and staff effectively work together to maintain a safe, disciplined environment. However, the principal, parents, teachers and students all report concerns about the supervision during dismissal, recess and lunch. Students and parents say that, during lunch and recess, not all students are treated fairly by the supervisors. Parents and teachers report that students run unsupervised in the parking lot during dismissal. These issues create safety concerns and detract from the positive school climate. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrator, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, district strategic plan, school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, district and school policies and practices)*

Instructional practices and professional development go hand-in-hand at Washington Oak School. Teachers, staff and parents learn together through a variety of professional development activities centered on improving student learning and teaching practices. Most importantly, professional development is embedded within the school day. During voluntary grade level meetings, lunch time and personal time, teachers examine student work, share effective practices and create common rubrics to improve their teaching. Teachers share and develop their expertise, modeling and co-teaching lessons. Despite extensive professional development, teachers do struggle as they acknowledge the need to find a balance and cohesiveness among the many programs and initiatives at the school. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, parents, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, school administrator, reviewing records of professional development activities, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, district strategic plan, self-study, grade-level minutes)*

While the Coventry School District has a long-term vision for the use of technology in the classroom, access to technology and technical support is noticeably lacking at Washington Oak School. Teachers and administrators recognize the importance of technology as a learning tool, yet they do not have the available resources. Some students come to school with a technical proficiency beyond what the school offers, while others do not have access except at school, thus widening the equity gaps. While the school is well wired to support internet access, individual classrooms lack the necessary hardware to provide this valuable resource. The available technical equipment and related systems are limited or out-of-date, including student computers, printers, copy machines, TV's and phones. This limited technology seriously impedes both teaching and learning. *(observing classes, following students, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, district strategic plan, school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

Commendations for Washington Oak Elementary School

Inclusion of special needs students

Strong involvement of families

Student-centered focus

Strong, effective, shared leadership

Job-embedded professional development

Recommendations for Washington Oak Elementary School

Increase, update and maintain technology. Provide more computers and phones with outside access, as well as a copy machine.

Review supervision policies, and monitor supervision procedures during dismissal, recess and lunch.

Continue to provide professional development to support the inclusion model, differentiate instruction and challenge all learners

Support ongoing use of teacher expertise, modeling and coaching.

Initiate school-wide discussions to balance the many programs and initiatives in mathematics and language arts.

Recommendations for Coventry School District

Provide funding, training, manpower and maintenance for the technical needs at the school.

Revise and update the math and language arts curriculum.

Continue to support special education initiatives.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The SALT Team recognizes and applauds the hard work of the Washington Oak School Community. Through open communication, established partnerships with families and a strong vision, you have created a respectful learning environment for every child. All are welcomed and valued.

Your work as a team has set a foundation for excellence, and your efforts have already made a notable difference in areas you have chosen to work on, including problem-solving, inclusion of all students and job-embedded professional development. However, your work is not done.

Focus on consistent differentiated instruction and academic rigor for all students. Continue to reflect on your practices to improve their effectiveness in your inclusion classrooms to enhance instruction and achievement for all. Pursue an optimal balance of instruction in reading, writing and math. Teacher expertise is your gateway to student success to ensure that increased test scores becomes a trend.

The SALT Team admires you as reflective practitioners. The reciprocal respect among teachers and students creates an environment that is the envy of many other schools. You have accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time. Continue the momentum, and use your noticeable accomplishments to stay focused on the work ahead.

8. ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Washington Oak Elementary School

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of a portion of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
DATE: November 5, 2004

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Washington Oak Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Washington Oak Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *observing classes directly*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 12 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *observing grade level meetings*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *discussing student work with teachers*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Washington Oak Elementary School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2003 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 2003 Information Works!*

2003 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries
2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results
School and District Report Cards
Parent Information Booklets K-5
Coventry Public Schools Progress Reports K-5
2004 Rhode Island Alternate Assessment results
grade level team meeting minutes
School Improvement Team minutes
2000-2001 Elementary Science Curriculum draft
1999-2000 Coventry Public Schools English/Language Arts Curriculum
Correlation of Signatures 1997 to Coventry Reading Curriculum
Audubon Society of Rhode Island 2004-2005 Environmental Education
Programs and Resources
Survey of Faculty Satisfaction from Substitute Teachers
Washington Oak Self-study
Sargent Rehabilitation Center Parent Workshop Series
Videos and DVD's on Washington Oak School

State Assessment Results for Washington Oak Elementary School

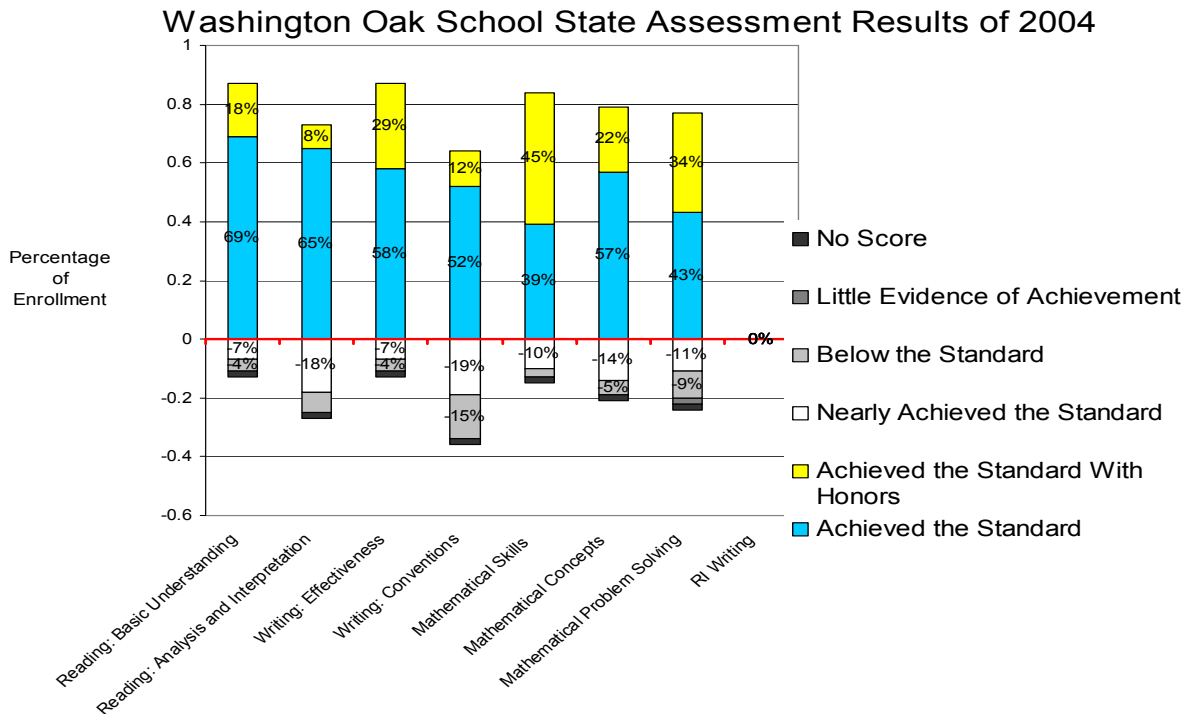
Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

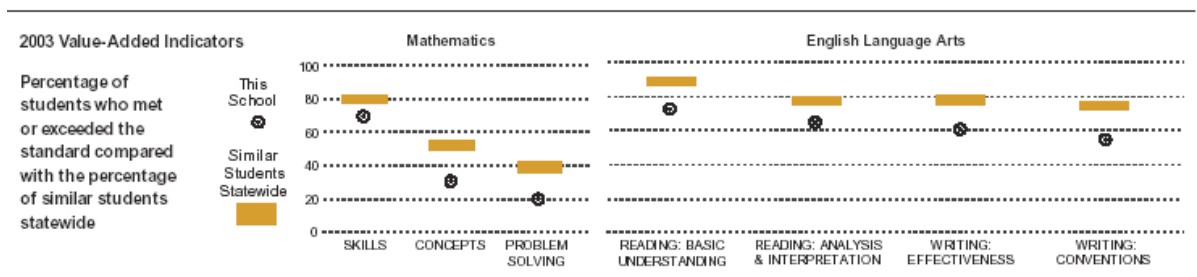
- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

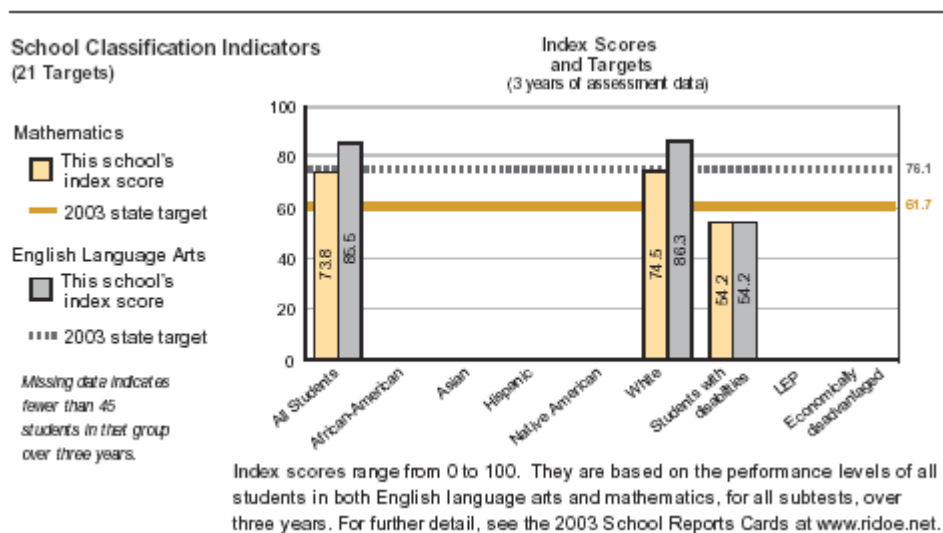
Table 1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments**STUDENT RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS STATEWIDE**

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

Table 2. 2002-2003 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide

RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students who are in the school. This display shows targets and index scores and reflects the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows Results compared to similar students in the stategroups with 45 or more students across three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gaps.

Table 3 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups**REPORT CARD FOR WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

This Report Card show the performance of Washington Oak Elementary School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Washington Oak Elementary School as a school in need of improvement making insufficient progress.

Table 4. Report Card for Washington Oak Elementary School

Information Works! data for Washington Oak Elementary School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

THE WASHINGTON OAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Jackie Costa
Grade 4 Teacher

Pat Johnston
Parent

Richard Keenan
Principal

Cynthia McDonnell
Grade 1 Teacher

Kathleen McKinney
Grade 5 Teacher

Betty Nadrowski
Grade 1 Teacher

Pamela O'Brien
Parent

Jessica O'Connell
Grade 2 Teacher

Beth Ann Paretta
School Nurse Teacher

Kristen Perry
Grade 2 Teacher

Beth Sharkey
Parent

Susan Toohey Kaye
Grade 1 Teacher

Melissa White
Grade 2

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

Ruth S. Haynsworth
Grade 5 Teacher
Stony Lane Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island
on leave to the
Office of School Improvement and Support Services
Rhode Island Department of Education
as a SALT Fellow
SALT Team Chair

Andre Audette
Standards Coach
Pawtucket School Department
on leave to the
Office of School Improvement and
Support Services
Rhode Island Department of
Education
as a SALT Fellow

Joan Alix
Assistant Principal
Peace Dale Elementary School
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Alison Belcher
Grade 1 Teacher
John F. Kennedy School
Middletown, Rhode Island

Patricia D'Alfonso
Grade 1 Teacher/Speech Pathologist
Greenbush Elementary School
West Warwick, Rhode Island

Ken Duva
Special Education Teacher
Quidnessett Elementary School
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Susan Flynn
Grade 5 Teacher
Saylesville Elementary School
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Carol Glanville
Grade 1 Teacher
Reynolds School
Bristol, Rhode Island
Chris Haskins
Principal
Glen Hills Elementary School
Cranston, Rhode Island

Jennifer Holubeko
Grade 4 Teacher
Aquidneck Elementary School
Middletown, Rhode Island

Janice Mowry
Mathematics Coordinator
Captain Isaac Paine School
Foster, Rhode Island

David Watterson
Grade 6 Teacher
Drum Rock Elementary School
Warwick, Rhode Island